

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: PFOR, TS

SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF RICHARD WELCH ASSASSINATION

1. TUNISIAN PRESS HAS FOLLOWED WITH INTEREST NEWS CONCERNING CONTINUING INVESTIGATIONS INTO CIA. IT HAS USUALLY CONTENTED ITSELF WITH WIRE-SERVICE REPORTS. RE WELCH ASSASSINATION INDEPENDENT DAILIES LE TEMPS AND AS-SABAH (BOTH UNDER SAME MANAGEMENT) HAVE GONE FURTHER THAN OTHER PAPERS TO LEND CREDENCE TO FALSE CHARGES.

2. THUS AS-SABAH DECEMBER 28, IN A "COMMENT" SIGNED BY AN APPARENTLY JUNIOR EDITOR UNKNOWN TO EMBASSY, STATES FLATLY THAT WELCH IS THE FIRST SECRET AGENT KILLED BY CIA ITSELF BUT WILL NOT BE THE LAST. COMMENTATOR REMARKS THAT THIS SHOWS HOW LOW THE CIA HAS FALLEN IN THAT IT DOES NOT EVEN GIVE AGENTS CHANCE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES WHEN THEY HAVE MADE AN ERROR. THESE REMARKS APPEAR AT END OF ARTICLE MAKING POINTS THAT WELCH ASSASSINATION IS LINKED TO STRUGGLE BETWEEN THOSE WHO WISH TO RESTRICT CIA ACTIVITY AND THOSE WHO DO NOT, AND THAT IT IS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, IN CONTRAST TO THEIR GOVERNMENT, WHO ARE AGAINST MAINTAINING AN INSTITUTION WHICH ASSASSINATES WORLD PERSONALITIES AND ORGANIZES COUPS D'ETAT.

3. LE TEMPS DECEMBER 27 HAD STATED THAT NEW YORK TIMES
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THE PREVIOUS DAY REPORTED "REVELATION" BY HOWARD HUNT

CONCERNING EXISTENCE OF A CIA "SPECIAL SECTION" FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DOUBLE AGENTS. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT AS-SABAH COMMENTATOR MADE TOTALLY UNWARRANTED CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO STORIES WITHOUT MALICIOUS INTENT. WE NOTE LE TEMPS' OWN VERSION OF THE ASSASSINATION STORY DECEMBER 28 LIMITS ITSELF TO "QUOTING" GREEK NEWSPAPERS WHICH HELD CIA RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER.

4. COMMENT: LOCAL PRESS, OTHER THAN TWO PAPERS MENTIONED ABOVE, IS LARGELY OFFICIAL IN NATURE AND HAS PLAYED STORY MORE RESPONSIBLY. EMBASSY HAS NOT SEEN REPEATED ELSEWHERE EITHER A NEW YORK TIMES STORY ON CIA "SPECIAL SECTION" OR ALLEGED GREEK PRESS CLAIMS THAT CIA MURDERED WELCH. WOULD APPRECIATE ADDRESSEES CONFIRMING OR DENYING EXISTENCE OF THESE STORIES ON WHICH INDEPENDENT TUNISIAN PAPER HAS BASED ITS UNWARRANTED COMMENTARY.
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